



Climate change health assessment: A novel approach for Alaska Native communities

Author(s): Brubaker MY, Bell JN, Berner JE, Warren JA
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Abstract:

OBJECTIVES: Develop a process for assessing climate change impacts on public health that identifies climate-health vulnerabilities and mechanisms and encourages adaptation. **STUDY DESIGN:** Multi-stakeholder, participatory, qualitative research. **METHODS:** A Climate Change Health Assessment (CCHA) was developed that involved 4 steps: (1) scoping to describe local conditions and engage stakeholders; (2) surveying to collect descriptive and quantitative data; (3) analysis to evaluate the data; and (4) planning to communicate findings and explore appropriate actions with community members. The health effects related to extreme weather, thinning ice, erosion, flooding, thawing permafrost and changing conditions of water and food resources were considered. **RESULTS:** The CCHA process was developed and performed in north-west Arctic villages. Refinement of the process took place in Point Hope, a coastal Inupiat village that practices whaling and a variety of other traditional subsistence harvest practices. Local observers identified climate change impacts that resulted in damaged health infrastructure, compromised food and water security and increased risk of injury. Priority health issues included thawing traditional ice cellars, diminished quality of the community water source and increased safety issues related to sea ice change. The CCHA increased awareness about health vulnerability and encouraged informed planning and decision-making. **CONCLUSION:** A community-scale assessment process guided by observation-based data can identify climate health impacts, raise awareness and encourage adaptive actions, thereby improving the response capacity of communities vulnerable to climate change.

Source: Ask your librarian to help locate this item.

Resource Description

Communication:

resource focus on research or methods on how to communicate or frame issues on climate change; surveys of attitudes, knowledge, beliefs about climate change

A focus of content

Communication Audience:

audience to whom the resource is directed

Policymaker, Public

Exposure :

Climate Change and Human Health Literature Portal

weather or climate related pathway by which climate change affects health

Extreme Weather Event, Food/Water Quality, Food/Water Quality, Temperature

Extreme Weather Event: Flooding, Landslides

Geographic Feature: 

resource focuses on specific type of geography

Arctic

Geographic Location: 

resource focuses on specific location

United States

Health Co-Benefit/Co-Harm (Adaption/Mitigation): 

specification of beneficial or harmful impacts to health resulting from efforts to reduce or cope with greenhouse gases

A focus of content

Health Impact: 

specification of health effect or disease related to climate change exposure

Injury

Intervention: 

strategy to prepare for or reduce the impact of climate change on health

A focus of content

Mitigation/Adaptation: 

mitigation or adaptation strategy is a focus of resource

Adaptation

Population of Concern: A focus of content

Population of Concern: 

populations at particular risk or vulnerability to climate change impacts

Racial/Ethnic Subgroup

Other Racial/Ethnic Subgroup: Alaska Natives

Resource Type: 

format or standard characteristic of resource

Research Article

Timescale: 

time period studied

Time Scale Unspecified

Vulnerability/Impact Assessment:

resource focus on process of identifying, quantifying, and prioritizing vulnerabilities in a system

A focus of content